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ABSTRACT

An experimental program of 24 hour parietals was implemented in 17 residential colleges in the fall of 1968. A questionnaire on residential life was sent to 4000 resident students. The study includes four tables regarding 24 hour parietals by comparing: (1) male-female problems; (2) differences among classes; (3) sex and class year; and (4) hall and suite living. Also contained are four more charts reflecting responses to the question: "Should parietals be continued?". These charts compare: (1) male-female responses; (2) class differences; (3) sex and class year responses; and (4) male and female hall, suite and coed living arrangements. Some results of the survey are: (1) female students experience more problems than male students with open visitation; (2) differences exist among classes; (3) differences exist among female classes; (4) students in coed housing have more problems with hall arrangements than with suites; (5) more females than males feel parietals should be continued, and (6) more seniors oppose open visitation than any other class. (Author/MC)

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A Survey of Student Response to 24 Hour Parietals

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"Rules make decision easy
but rob it of wisdom."

Henry M. Wriston, Academic Procession

As institutions of higher education begin a new decade, the interaction of disillusionment, which has characterized student-faculty-administrative relationships on many campuses, will likely continue unless institutional policies and practices are subjected to continuous critical examination. This is likely to occur whether we focus on the role of the University, relevance of the curriculum or the reasonableness of residential rules. Student demands for increased freedom and privacy in residential living arrangements raises several fundamental policy questions: What are the necessary and appropriate rules for a given institution? What is the institutional educational philosophy regarding control of student behavior?[1] What is the role and responsibility of residence hall staff? Because it is difficult, if not impossible, to turn the clock back again once students are granted increased freedom, the preceding questions, as well as others, deserve careful attention before an institution embarks on a program of open visitation.[2]

Note: This study was presented as a Commission III Program, ACPA, St. Louis, Missouri, March 17, 1970.

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METHOD

The State University of New York at Stony Brook implemented an experimental program of 24 hour parietals in the fall of 1968. Each hall within the twenty-two residential colleges (200-400 students per college) established visiting hours up to 24 hours in the fall semester after acceptance by two-thirds of the hall residents voting by secret ballot. Individual rooms or suites could limit hours but could not increase visiting hours beyond the hall hours. The seventeen residential colleges included the following numbers and variations of housing arrangements:

No.	Type of Residential Unit	Students
4	Male Hall (Corridor)	465
2	Female Hall (Corridor)	256
1	Coed (Alternate floor)	219
1	Coed (Alternate suite)	21
5	Male Suites	310
4	Female Suites	362
17		1633

After one semester operation with 24 hour parietals, a questionnaire on residential life was sent to 4000 residence students. A total of 1633 students returned the survey, 900 males and 733 females. The students were asked whether twenty-four hour parietals caused any problems and whether open visitation should be continued.

Chi square analysis was used to compare responses by sex, class year and type of living arrangement.

Table 1 shows the number of male and female residents who experienced difficulties with open visitation. Female students experienced significantly more problems than male students.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Male-Female Problems with 24 Hour Parietals

	Number having problems	% of total problem group	Total number in survey	% of survey group having problems
Male	80	29.7	900	8.9 *
Female	189	70.3	731	25.9 *

*$p < .05$

In Table 2, problems with 24 hour parietals are compared by class year. Juniors experienced the most problems followed by seniors, freshmen and sophomores. No significant differences were found among classes.

TABLE 2

Comparison of Problems with 24 Parietals by Class Year

	Number having problems	% of total problem group	Total number in survey	% of survey group having problems
Senior	37	13.9	214	17.3
Junior	64	24.0	337	19.0
Soph	71	26.6	486	14.6
Frosh	95	35.6	587	16.2

Table 3 provides a comparison by sex and class year. Male juniors had significantly more problems than other male classes. No significant differences were found among female classes.

TABLE 3

	Number having problems	% of total problem group	Total number in survey	% of survey group having problems
Male Sr.	8	3.0	99	8.6
Female Sr.	29	10.9	115	25.2
Male Jr.	22	8.2	169	13.0 *
Female Jr.	42	15.7	167	25.1
Male Soph	19	7.1	285	6.7
Female Soph	52	19.5	201	25.9
Male Frosh	31	11.6	343	9.0
Female Frosh	64	24.0	244	26.2

*p<.05

Hall and Suite living arrangements are compared in Table 4. There were no significant differences with women or men in hall or suite accommodations. Students in coed housing had significantly more problems with hall arrangements than with suites.

TABLE 4

	Number having problems	% of total problem group	Total number in survey	% of survey group having problems
Male Hall	43	15.6	465	9.9
Male Suite	24	8.9	310	7.7
Female Hall	77	28.9	256	30.0
Female Suite	73	28.9	361	20.2
Coed Hall	46	17.1	219	21.0 *
Coed Suite	1	.4	21	4.8 *

*p<.05

Tables 5 through 8 provide information on the question, "Should parietals be continued?" Table 5 shows that significantly more females than males felt parietals should not be continued. Of the 1632 students responding to the survey, 118 or 7.2 percent, felt parietals should not be continued.

TABLE 5

Comparison of Male-Female response to "Should parietals be continued?"

	Number responding "no"	% of group responding "no"	Total number in survey	% of total survey responding "no"
Male	35	29.7	900	3.9 *
Female	83	70.3	732	11.5 *

*p<.05

Seniors indicated the most opposition to continuing 24 hour parietals as shown in Table 6. Seniors differed significantly from freshmen and sophomores in whether to continue open visitation. A significant difference was found between seniors and the freshmen-sophomore classes.

TABLE 6

Comparison by Class to "Should parietals be continued?"

	Number responding "no"	% of group responding "no"	Total number in survey	% of total survey responding "no"
Senior	24	20.5	215	11.1 *
Junior	29	24.8	337	8.6
Soph	29	24.8	486	5.9 *
Frosh	35	29.9	587	5.9 *

*p<.05

Table 7 shows the sex and class response to the question of continuing open visitation. Female seniors were the most vocal group in opposing 24 hour parietals, while male juniors were the most opposed male group. There was no significant difference within male or female classes.

TABLE 7

Comparison by Class and Sex to "Should parietals be continued?"

	Number responding "no"	% of group responding "no"	Total number in survey	% of total survey responding "no"
Male Sr.	5	4.3	99	5.1
Female Sr.	19	16.2	116	16.4
Male Jr.	11	9.4	169	6.5
Female Jr.	18	15.4	167	10.8
Male Soph	6	5.1	285	2.1
Female Soph	23	19.7	201	11.4
Male Frosh	13	11.1	343	3.8
Female Frosh	22	18.8	244	9.0

Table 8 compares male and female hall, suite and coed living arrangments. Female halls represented the most opposition followed closely by coed halls. There were no significant differences between male halls and male suites or female halls and female suites. Coed halls encountered significantly more problems than coed suites.

TABLE 8

Comparison by sex and residential arrangement to "Should parietals be continued?"

	Number responding "no"	% of group responding "no"	Total number in survey	% of total survey responding "no"
Male Hall	20	16.9	465	4.3
Male Suite	10	8.4	310	3.2
Female Hall	31	26.3	256	12.1
Female Suite	33	27.9	361	9.3
Coed Hall	24	20.3	219	11.0 *
Coed Suite	0	0.0	21	0.0 *

*$p < .05$

DISCUSSION

The results of the survey, which indicate no significant differences among female classes, suggest that freshmen women may be as able to handle the additional freedom of open visitation as other female classes, although many institutions continue the traditional practice of stricter regulations for freshmen women. If housing arrangements provide a sufficient mix of freshmen with other classes, then the presence of appropriate upperclass role models may provide the necessary peer group assistance in the freshman year.

The data suggests that women have more problems with 24 hour parietals than men. Our social structure, with its double standards for men and women, may provide some explanation for the differences. Women are taught to have a greater need for privacy, to look one's best in male company and to be appropriately dressed when in the presence of men. Privacy is minimal in dormitory living when residences are open 24 hours a day. With men coming and going and free to drop in at any time, the female cannot always look her best (rollers, make-up lacking, etc.) nor can she be appropriately attired at all times, even though acceptable dress on many campuses may simply be blue jeans and over-sized sweat shirts. In brief, open visitation changes the traditional residential life style of both sexes. Although all classes experienced some problems, it's doubtful whether more restricted visitation would have decreased interpersonal problems associated with group living. Even though 26 percent of the women and 9 percent of the men experienced some problems with parietals, support for continuing the open visitation averaged over 90 percent (89% for women and 96% for men).

The results indicate that corridor or hall living gives rise to more problems than suite living. The needs of both sexes for increased freedom and privacy appear to be more inhibited by traditional army "barracks-style" housing with communal bath and rest room facilities in contrast to self-contained apartment-like living of students suites. Institutions need to examine the advisability of constructing conventional housing in view of changing student life styles. The critical importance of constructing residential facilities which are responsive to the needs of present and future generations of students is obvious. Unfortunately, few institutions have systematically examined the costs and advantages, both economic and educational, of various architectural styles and groupings of students. Noteworthy research on the relationship between architectural arrangements and patterns of student association is lacking.[3] However, numerous studies have documented the importance of the subculture on student development.

The additional freedom of open visitation creates new problems and potential conflict between roommates of a different magnitude than the age-old problem of meshing sleep and study schedules. The old rules of the game which governed relations between the sexes take on an antique quality in the context of open visitation. New variations of interpersonal conflicts ostensibly controlled by external constraints of the past require a new response on the part of residential staff. Staff roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined so that students who need advice and counsel will feel free to discuss problems openly without fear of disciplinary action. Dual responsibility for counseling and control embodied in the traditional

residence hall director is a questionable staff model. An increasing number of students appear to be confused and threatened by the all-purpose residence director.

In order to minimize role ambiguities and maximize the responsiveness of residence staff to the problems of residence students, the Residence Hall Director was functionally divided into manager and counseling staff. Violations of residence regulations, such as the misuse of guest privileges, were handled as a landlord matter by the manager. Live-in counselors were available to assist students in resolving interpersonal conflicts of group living. The manager-counselor-advisor concept is now considered a workable staffing model and has been extended to new residential units.

In the final analysis, research and study of residential rules, staff roles and educational goals must be conducted in the context of a particular institutional setting and philosophy. This study has attempted to raise some questions and suggest a possible response to the problems created by student demands for increasing freedom and privacy in residence.

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